



GROW

Learning How to Walk Worthy of Your Calling

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Introduction: Suggestions for Students

Welcome! This lesson book was designed to get you in God's word to help you grow in your walk with God. In **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** Paul compared the Christian walk to a race. Runners only start a race because they intend on finishing, but runners only make it to the finish line through training and discipline. Living for God's glory as a Christian is the same. Nobody enters into a covenant with Christ and receives God's grace with the intention of giving up later, but we will only finish the spiritual race before us if we are trained to grow in God's grace. Fortunately, Christ died to secure our salvation and provide us with a storehouse of grace and mercy to help us grow and finish the race. Never give up on Christ and he will never give up on you. He will cause you to grow and persevere.

Paul told the Ephesians that Christ gave the church leaders to help Christians grow in their walk with God. Paul explains in **Ephesians 4:14-16** why this is so necessary. *"Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."* To put it simply, we need to grow so we are not like immature, malnourished children in the faith. We need to grow because we are not yet perfected in Christ's image, but that is our goal. This booklet exists to help you in this growth. Here are some suggestions.

- If you are studying through these lessons with a teacher, take time to briefly read the assigned text(s) before your study. This will help you learn more in the actual study because you will already have questions and comments on your mind.
- The Bible takes precedence over any man's opinions or traditions, but some things the Bible says are difficult to understand and can lend to disagreements. Disagreeing about unclear details and practices will happen. If you are studying through these lessons with a teacher, strive to come to a unified understanding of truth with gentleness and patience.
- Our faith does not rest on doubt. If you are studying through these lessons with a teacher, always feel free to ask questions, even if it is not covered in the text at hand.
- Outside of this study, make sure you don't miss any opportunities to meet with the church. Participating in the Bible classes, worship, Lord's Supper, prayer, and opportunities to serve is important for your growth and the congregation's unity (cf. Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Outside of this study, make sure you are taking time to pray and read on your own each day. If you have not read through Luke and Acts, begin reading a couple chapters each day so you can learn more about Jesus and how we as his followers should live. If you have already done that, consider beginning in Genesis and reading through the whole Bible. Ask a shepherd, evangelist, or teacher for guidance if you want help in determining what you should read.
- When you study, keep pen and paper nearby so you can write down questions or things you want to remember. Ask questions. Why is this important? How does this change my life? Be sure to read from a modern Bible translation you can understand. I recommend the ESV.

Cherish God's word more than anything. In it you will find life, joy, growth, and stability. I offer **Psalms 1:1-3** as an encouragement to get into God's word. *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."*

Lesson 1: Your Identity in Christ (Ephesians 1-3)

Who do you think you are? How would you describe your identity? Many say different things. I am tall. I am short. I am single. I am married. I am athletic. I am smart. I am funny. I am quiet. I am rich. I am poor. I am a student. I am Mom. I am Dad. Our identity shapes how we think, talk, and live. Though we are all unique individuals, when we become Christians, God gives us a new identity. Your new identity is to be a child of God. As your Father, God has made every spiritual blessing available to you. Today we are going to consider how portions of **Ephesians 1-3** describe your blessings as a child of God and learn why God has blessed you so richly. Get ready to embrace your new identity and life purpose.

Every Spiritual Blessing (Ephesians 1:1-14)

1. What blessing is described in **1:4**? What is the significance of the timing? What is the goal of this?

2. What blessing is described in **1:5**? What does this mean? How can this give us hope in uncertainty?

3. What blessing is described in **1:7-8**? What does this mean? How can this help us fight against sin?

4. What blessing is described in **1:11**? What does this mean (ASV: "... we were made a heritage...")? In **1:13-14**, how does God mark that he owns us until he does redeem us? What does this look like?

We will return to **verses 6, 12, and 14** to see God's purpose in richly blessing us at the end of our study.

Before Your Spiritual Blessings (Ephesians 2:1-10)

5. Consider **2:1-3**. What was our situation before being adopted? How does this contrast affect you?

6. Consider **2:4-9**. How does Paul describe our current situation? What caused this change? What didn't?

7. Consider **2:10**. What does God desire to do with our lives now?

God's Power in You (Ephesians 3:14-21)

8. Following Paul's example in **3:14-19**, what should we pray for so we might grow to be mature and filled with all the fullness of God? What does this accomplish in **3:19-21**?

9. Look back over **Ephesians 1-3** and notice why God blesses us (**1:6, 12, 14; 3:10, 21**). Why did God adopt, redeem, and save you? How does this shape the purpose of your identity as God's child?

LESSON 1 APPLICATIONS

You were dead, but now you are a child of the Most High. As a child of the Most High, God has blessed you for his glory. **Remember when you pray:** Christ's love for me takes God-given strength to comprehend. God's power can do exceedingly abundantly above all I ask or think. This blessing is for God's glory. God is glorified by infinitely blessing undeserving people to turn their hearts towards Him. **Worship for God's glory** with your story at heart: I was lost, but now I am found.

Lesson 2: Walk Worthy in Unity (Ephesians 4)

In **Ephesians 1-3** Paul described how the calling of the Christian is to live to the praise of God's glory by receiving every spiritual blessing in Christ. God's wisdom is made known to all physical and spiritual beings by redeeming undeserving people. In **Ephesians 4-6** Paul urges us *"to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called."* Because God has called us to be to the praise of his glory, there is a certain way we ought to live. We are saved by grace to honor God in purity, not to return to sin. **Ephesians 4** teaches us to have unity with a local church so we can grow into Christ-like maturity.

Walk Worthy in Unity (Ephesians 4:1-6)

1. Read **4:1-3**. What is the first way Paul instructs us to walk worthy in **verse 3**? What does this teach us about the importance of being connected to a local family of believers?

2. How does Paul tells us to pursue unity with one another (**4:2-3**)?

3. Read **4:4-6**. What is the basis for our unity with one another?

4. Is it healthy to be a part of a church that does not teach and practice these seven truths in **4:4-6**?

Equipping the Saints (Ephesians 4:7-16)

5. What did Christ give his church in **4:11-12**? What are their overall (**vs. 12**) and specific functions?

6. Notice **4:13-16**. What are the goals in being built up by the body? Why is this important?

7. Is it healthy to be a part of a church that does not focus on what we see here in **4:11-16**?*

Renewing the Mind (Ephesians 4:17-32)

8. Read **4:17-19**. How must we no longer walk/think? How can we stop developing calloused thinking?

9. Read **4:20-24**. What manner of life should we pursue? How can we pursue this new way of living?

10. What does Paul tell us to “put off” and “put on” in **4:25-32**? How can **verse 29** help your speech?

LESSON 2 APPLICATIONS

We are to live in a way that honors our calling to glorify God. We cannot do this without unification with a local body of believers. Other Christians help us grow in maturity so we aren't destroyed by life's storms or by false teaching. Minds that were once greedy to practice impurity can be transformed by the Word into the pure likeness of God. Regularity in God's word and unity with a Bible-teaching congregation results in growth and renewal. *Read **Acts 2:42-47** to see God's pattern for church activity.

Lesson 3: Walk Worthy in Relationships (Ephesians 5-6)

In **Ephesians 1-3** Paul described how Christians are called for God's glory and in **Ephesians 4-6** Paul urges us "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling..." Because God has called us to be to the praise of his glory, there is a certain way we must live. Last time we saw the need for unity with a local church so we can be equipped to serve. As Paul continues to describe the worthy walk, Paul instructs us in **Ephesians 5:1** to imitate God and in **Ephesians 5:21** to submit to one another. From Oprah to modern therapists to Dove Chocolate wrappers, our culture teaches us to live for self. But our text today teaches us to give up ourselves in complete submission to one another. Let's notice why.

Imitate God (Ephesians 5:1-21)

1. Notice **5:1-2**. What does Paul instruct us to do in **verse 1-2**? How can we do this?
2. What unloving actions does Paul command us to avoid in **5:3-4**? To what do these words refer?
3. What warning does Paul give in in **5:5-6**? Why is this warning so important for us to hear today?
4. What instructions does Paul give us to prevent us from leaving the light for the darkness in **5:7-17**?
5. Considering **5:18-20**, what should we and shouldn't we be filled with? How?

Submit to One Another (Ephesians 5:21-6:9)

6. **Ephesians 5:21** tells all to submit. What is submission? Should we equate submission with inferiority?

7. How are wives told to submit to their husbands in **5:22-24**?

8. How does the text instruct husbands with respect to wives who do not submit?

9. Consider **5:25-33**. How does Paul instruct husbands to love their wives? What does this mean?

10. Consider Christ's example in **5:25-27**. What should a husband's spiritual leadership look like?

11. Read **6:1-4**. How are children commanded to live? Why? How are fathers commanded to treat children? For parents, see also **Deuteronomy 6:7**, **Proverbs 22:15**, and **Proverbs 23:13-14**.

12. Read **6:5-9**. How must servants (or employees) act? How must masters (or bosses) act?

LESSON 3 APPLICATIONS

We must imitate God by walking in love. We cannot do this if we walk in unholy sexual desires, impurity, idolatry, and crude speech. God's wrath will fall on us if our practice is to walk in sin. We will imitate God and be children of light when we flee selfishness and instead submit to others. Wives are respect their husbands. Husbands are to love their wives. Children are to obey their parents. Servants are to obey their masters. Masters must stop their threatening. This submission is not weak, it is Christ-like.

Lesson 4: Grow in God's Word (Matthew 13)

It is surprising how many eventually leave behind God's rich blessings. Why do different people have different reactions to the gospel? Why does the gospel produce life transformation in some, but others are hardly changed? The parable of the sower tells us why some bear fruit and why others do not. The gospel's ability to bear fruit in someone's life depends on the heart in which the gospel is planted. As we study, consider some questions. Which "dirt" am I going to be? What dangers does Jesus warn new Christians about? What is the key to growing and bearing fruit?

The Parable (Matthew 13:1-9)

1. Quickly note: What four soils and results does Jesus identify? What is the meaning of **verse 9**?

The Explanation of Parables (Matthew 13:10-17)

2. How does Jesus describe the spiritual condition of the disciples (**vs. 11-12, 16**)?

3. How does Jesus describe the spiritual condition of the crowds (**vs. 13-15**)?

Jesus will now give the interpretation of the parable which describes **why** some have dull hearts that resist Christ and **why** others do not. This is a time for serious introspection.

The Interpretation of the Parable (Matthew 13:18-23)

4. Consider the heart that the **path** represents (**19**). What is the problem? Consider how **Ephesians 4:18-19** describes the effect of Satan and sin in a similar way.

5. Consider the heart that the **rocky ground** represents (**20-21**). Describe what happens with this heart.

Lesson 5: Grow in Prayer

Prayer is one of the greatest assets Christians have. Because of Christ's cleansing blood, when we pray we have the opportunity to speak to, worship, and petition God who created the universe. However, prayer is not natural for us. Unfortunately, mankind usually worships and relies on self. But Scripture gives us examples and direct teaching to help us learn to pray. Prayer is not a good work that saves us, but Christians soon learn that growth and faithfulness are not possible without this key form of communication with our Father in Heaven. Let's learn about this key component of being God's child.

Understanding God

1. We need to know the power and love of God when we pray. What does **Ephesians 3:20** teach us about God's power? Why is this helpful to know?

2. How does **Matthew 7:7-11** tell us God views our relationship? Why is this helpful to know?

3. How can the description of Jesus in **Hebrews 4:14-16** be helpful for our faith and prayers?

Warnings about Prayer

4. Before we consider positive admonitions about prayer, let's consider some of the Bible's warnings. Consider **James 1:5-8**. What warning does James give about prayer?

5. What warning about prayer are we given in **James 4:1-4**?

6. What warnings about prayer did Jesus give in **Matthew 6:5-8**?

How Should We Pray?

7. Consider Jesus' example prayer in **Matthew 6:9-13**. What is the contrast between **verses 9-10** and **verses 11-13**? What ways is Jesus' prayer helpful for your learning?

8. How is **James 5:15-18** helpful to your understanding of the power of prayer?

9. How does **Philippians 4:6-7** teach us to handle the temptation to be overcome by anxiety?

10. How does the parable in **Luke 18:1-8** teach us to pray?

11. How does the parable in **Luke 18:9-14** teach us to pray?

12. After an irrevocable law had been signed that condemned to death any who prayed to God, how did Daniel respond in **Daniel 6:10**? How does Daniel's example teach you about prayer?

LESSON 5 APPLICATIONS

Throughout Scripture God pleads with his children to rely on him instead of their own strength. Our greatest sin is often self-reliance. We cannot grow if we are not deeply connected to God in prayer. Pray for your spiritual growth today. Pray understanding God's unfathomable power, fatherly love, and sympathetic understanding. Do not pray with doubting, idolatrous lust, or for attention from man. Pray with simplicity focusing on God's glory, your spiritual needs, and your physical needs. Pray with faith, persistence, humility, and regularity. Hold your privilege to pray as infinitely valuable.

Lesson 6: Grow in Purposeful Suffering

One of the biggest killers of spiritual growth is also the greatest cause of growth. The problem of suffering in the life of Christians is deeply emotional and should not be taken lightly. People who believe in God's undeniable existence are at times so troubled by suffering that they give up trust in God. That some would give up trusting an all-powerful God they know to exist is a testament to the depth of pain Christians can experience. Think about how real this problem is as you consider questions many pose. "God is all-powerful and all-loving. Why am I still sick? Why has my family suffered? Why have we struggled with financial troubles? Why am I being persecuted?" This lesson is designed to correct attitudes in suffering, understand the causes of suffering, and adopt God's purposes for our suffering.

Correcting Our Attitude

1. Consider the truths in **Job 1:21**. What else is wrong with demanding God's blessings?

2. Consider Paul's words in **Romans 3:23** and **6:23**. Why is it wrong to think we deserve God's blessings?

Understanding the Causes of Suffering

Before we find purpose in suffering, consider how the Bible points to three general causes of suffering.

3. Who caused Job's trial in **Job 1:6-12**?

4. Consider **Proverbs 1:15-19** and **1:29-33**. What cause of suffering does Proverbs point to?

5. Consider **Ecclesiastes 9:11-12**. What cause of suffering does Ecclesiastes point to?

Lesson 7: Grow in Heart-Transforming Worship

How should we worship the Lord? Most today presume God does not care how we worship him. Most presume that as long as we direct what we identify as worship to God then he is happy with us. What do you think? Does God care how we worship him? Let's allow God to answer that question for us. As we consider this question we will discover how worship is at the heart of believers' lives because of the way true worship transforms the heart. This lesson is not meant to lead to condemnation, but transformation.

Does God Even Care?

1. Read **Leviticus 10:1-3** and **2 Samuel 6:1-9**. Did God care how Israel worshipped in the old covenant?

2. Read **Mark 7:1-9** and **Acts 5:1-11**. Does God still care how people worship in the new covenant?

Jesus says in **John 4:23-24**, *"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* True worshippers worship the Father in the manner he asks to be worshipped: with their spirit and in true, biblical ways. God cares how we worship, so we cannot worship with only spirit or only truth. God rarely tells us how **not** to worship. Telling us how to worship is sufficient just as telling a painter the color he should paint the walls is sufficient.

Congregational Worship in Moses' Covenant (OT)

3. Notice the direction for worship given in **1 Chronicles 16:4-7**. Who sings and plays each instrument?

4. Briefly notice **1 Chronicles 28:19**. Who was the source of direction for the temple and worship?

5. Though the temple had been neglected, how did Hezekiah restore worship in **2 Chronicles 29:25-30**?

6. Though over 500 years had passed since the Lord had given instruction to David regarding worship, what happened in **Nehemiah 12:24** and **12:45-47**? (Other examples: 2 Chronicles 23:18, Ezra 3:10, etc.)

Just as Nehemiah and others returned to David's example, we must return to the NT asking how God desires us to worship, how the first Christians worshipped, and what instruments we can use.

Congregational Worship in Christ's Covenant (NT)

7. Consider **Hebrews 7:12** and **8:13**. Should we return to David's instructions for worship? Explain.

8. Consider **Ephesians 5:19** and **Colossians 3:16**. How does God instruct Christians to worship? What instrument are they to use in making melody?

Consider Deuteronomy 12:29-32. Though instruments are commonly used in worship today, this has only become wide-spread in the past couple hundred years. Historically, we know the first Christians did not use instruments in congregational worship. Pope Vitalianus first introduced instruments in congregational worship in AD 670. He was strongly resisted. Hebrews and Galatians strongly warn against returning to circumcision or any of the shadows of the Mosaic law. John Calvin warned against this as well, "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of other shadows of the law."

9. What purposes do Ephesians and Colossians give for heart-felt worship in song?

10. How can you better obey the instructions God gives for worship in Ephesians and Colossians?

LESSON 7 APPLICATIONS

The purpose in reading these passages is **not** meant to display a condemning attitude toward others. God is our judge. We share the same simple purpose David, Hezekiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah shared: we recognize God cares how we worship, so we want to worship him exactly as he told us to. Keeping this in mind, consider how you can make melody with your heart when you sing. Here are some suggestions.

- Prepare your heart for worship by reading God's word and praying to him before you come to congregational worship so you are not distracted by the hectic week or weekend you have had.
- Decrease distractions in worship by silencing your phone, sitting closer to the front, making sure your children are disciplined, saving unrelated conversations for later, and by singing passionately.
- When you sing, focus intently on the words you are singing and how they relate to your walk with God. Focus on why you are specifically praising God *today*. Is it because of forgiven sin, answered prayers, or your physical and spiritual blessings? Also, focus on whether the songs are directed at encouraging others, your own soul, or expressing thanksgiving and requests to God.

Lesson 8: Find Your Place (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12)

Many 21st century churches run like businesses. Churches are marketed like products and hungry souls run from service to service seeking the church that makes them happy. They are the consumers, right? But this is not what God intended when he established the first church in Jerusalem, and it is not what he intends today. Glorifying God's name on earth isn't a "business" for paid professionals. It is the eternal purpose for which all God's people were created (cf. Ephesians 3:8-11). There are no providers and consumers. A church is a family. Each individual has unique gifts and plays a part. Where do you fit in?

A Living Sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2)

1. Since God gives us mercy, what does Paul tell us to do with our bodies? What does this mean? (12:1)

2. How can we present our bodies as living sacrifices to God? How can we practically do this? (12:2)

Many Gifts from Grace (Romans 12:3-6; 1 Corinthians 12:14-22)

3. Notice **Romans 12:3**. How does Paul teach us to think of ourselves?

4. How does Paul describe the local church in **Romans 12:4-5**?

5. What does Paul say the source of our differing gifts and functions is in **Romans 12:6**?

6. What way of thinking does Paul warn against in **1 Corinthians 12:14-20**? How does he correct this?

7. What way of thinking does Paul warn against in **1 Corinthians 12:21-22**? How does he correct this?

Find Your Place (Romans 12:6-8)

8. When Paul encourages the Romans to use their gifts, what 7 gifts does he list (12:6-8)?

Consider some practical examples of each gift (this list is very limited, not exhaustive).

<u>Serving</u>	<u>Teaching</u>	<u>Exhorting</u>	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Leading</u>	<u>Showing Mercy</u>
Babysit and care for children	Teaching Bible studies for children	Encouraging guests of our congregation	Generous weekly contributions	Shepherding (teach, guide, correct)	Constantly make peace in church
Care for elderly (cleaning, cooking, rides)	Teaching Bible studies for adults	Connect to new Christians (meals, studies)	Personally giving to needy saints	Servants [deacons] (lead serving church)	Pursue and encourage weak Christians
Upkeep of worship facilities	Evangelism (teaching non-Christians)	Cards, calls, visits to weak/sick Christians	Fund Christian adoptions	Evangelist (preach, teach non-Christians)	Befriend/help overlooked people
Cook food for busy/needy families	Teaching personal Bible studies	Praising and sharpening hard workers	Clothing/sheltering needy	Lead worship, talks, classes, various projects	Ask non-Christians for Bible studies

9. Consider your strengths, what you enjoy doing, and what others have told you you are good at. What gift(s) do you have? What ways can you put your gift(s) into action?

10. List name(s) of people in your local congregation who have these gifts and can helpfully mentor you.

LESSON 8 APPLICATIONS

Ephesians 4:15-16, *"Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."*

God knew what he was doing when he designed Christ's body. Christ as the head gives direction and we are the parts gifted to function in unique ways. When we unite to serve, teach, exhort, contribute, lead, and show mercy to one another and the world, we glorify Christ. We never know our gifts until we try. It may take time to find your place. Satan will wage war against you because he wants you to be useless. If you struggle, it is not a sign you should give up. All of God's children are useful. Your gifts and roles may change as you grow and as the needs around you change. When you find your gifts, GROW in those gifts! Muscles become powerful with disciplined exercise. Gifts are the same. Grow and don't stop.

What more can we study with you to help you grow in your gifts and in your knowledge of the Bible?